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International Writing Program Archive of Residents' Work

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[untitled]

Kgebetli Moele

Panel: Writer Rules: Share What You Go By

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## Kgebetli MOELE

Rules. There is nothing that I hate more than rules because they limit my freedom. Does limited freedom still qualify as freedom? No. I am controlled by the South African constitution, and you are governed by the United State constitution, so my freedom and your freedom is ultimately limited. As there are other things that restrict our freedom; my freedom is limited by poverty and yours is limited by terrorism.

I think that you will all agree with me that there is no true freedom, it is only freedom within a set of restrictions, therefore restricted freedom. Gravity limits us all; we should all be walking around like astronauts, but because of Gravity, something that you cannot touch and you cannot argue with regulates all human flesh.

Rules: I detested the day I knew of their existence: “You have to wear black school shoes to go to school.” And my feet did not like shoes; I survived primary school, but I could not survive a day in high school. They looked at me like I was some kind of a mad animal, then I had to adhere to that rule. And that is the sad thing about life and living, rules, or should I call them Limited Freedom.

“With all my South African experience, I wanted to write a novel, that I as a writer would long to read and reread it.” Bessie Head.

I subscribe myself to these words; they have somehow become my constitution of writing. My rule reads: I want to publish a novel that I as a writer would never get tired of reading it. Because I have written many things in my life and most of them I can’t even read because some are downright horrific, some are true boredom and some are way above my thinking and writing ability; the idea is there but the writing sucks. Excuse my language. I am still searching for somebody I can sell a sixty thousand-word manuscript because it has defeated my mind, however hard I tried to resuscitate it and give it a soul.

A friend of mine told me about a muse; he said, “you have a great muse.” I looked around. Stupid. It is this muse that becomes the writer’s rules, a writer’s constitution. This muse/constitution regulates the writer at every stage of the writing process. This muse becomes the writer’s companion, regulating every thought of the writer and scrutinizing every word that the writer writes.

It is the writer’s muse that exercises self-censorship which in itself is a rule ruling the final product that the writer wants to produce. The rule of consideration – the writer considers his or her readers – and then there is the biggest rule of them all: the publisher. That person who has the knowledge of everything of how the book should be and how it is going to do in the market, as if they know. But they regulate the writer needlessly and, at worst, they can ask the writer to rewrite the whole book.

It is not easy in to put in a chronological order, but every novel that you see on a book shelf has been censored in one way or another and it is facing its final censorship: the reader. The reader picks the book up out of the million books in the bookshelves. She or he reads the blurb. Touches it and feels it then reads the introduction paragraph; he puts it back on the shelf or pays for it. Like any other writer, I don’t have that power and influence of what happens to my books at the bookshelves.

Just like no writer has total control over that which he is writing, and if I had, then the *Book of the Dead* would have had three parts, the first part the Book of the Living, the Book of the Dead being the second and the Book of the Ghosts contributing to the last part, but because

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Kevin Bloom (S. Africa), Fabienne Kanor (France), Kgebetli Moele (S. Africa),

Usha K.R. (India), Moshe Sakal (Israel), Marvin Victor (Haiti), and Zhang Yueran (China)

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there were reasons of undisputable value, I had to do away with the Book of the Ghosts. In the sweet words of my publisher: “Lose your darlings.”

I knitted the words together, and the story was holding water. And she admits as well that those were the best lines, my darlings, as she says, and I had to lose them.

I have written so many beautiful pieces of writing that I love to read, and the only intellectual girlfriend I have ever had, an avid reader of books and avid reader of my manuscripts, worshipped all of my writing before realizing that worshipping perfect writings isn’t economically friendly to one’s life. And she said it. “Poetry can’t feed a baby.”

I am a writer, I am sensitive to language’s meaning and the implied meaning of language, and my heart answered, who said that I need a baby. But it was done; the most satisfying relationship I ever had – satisfying beyond sex because she read me a book right after – went down the drain, and unfortunately there has never been a replacement and there will never be.

And that gave birth to the only rule of every writer. The rule is:

Write to sell.

Don’t get me wrong, I love to write, and I want to write a love tale about Iowa River, African man on a borrowed bicycle and a female student unwinding and moving forward, a story that has no sex whatsoever, just mutual interaction of the three characters, but then no publisher will buy it because Kgebetli Moele is not a mainstream kind of a writer.

I have manuscripts written with love of writing that will never take up space on the bookshelves, and honestly it becomes wasted love of writing because even if Kgebetli Moele is not the bestselling author, let him have somebody reading.

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